

COACHE Draft Report on Governance Issues at BMCC

Areas of Concern Noted by COACHE

COACHE found all areas of governance to be of concern for faculty at BMCC. These areas were defined by COACHE as:

- *Trust* – whether the stakeholders involved in governance trust each other and the decision-making processes at their institution;
- *Shared Sense of Purpose* – whether stakeholders with diverse interests and perspectives are united by a shared sense of purpose;
- *Understanding the Issue at Hand* – whether decision-making is informed by inclusive dialog that promotes fuller understanding of the complex issues facing the institution;
- *Adaptability* – whether stakeholders reflect on the effectiveness of their governance practices and pursue improvements in the status quo; and
- *Productivity* – whether governance produces meaningful results.

Analysis of Responses to Governance Questions

Overall, BMCC scored very poorly on all aspects of Governance, with some of the lowest scores of our cohort. In qualitative responses, faculty overall described feeling dehumanized, overworked, and their input ignored by the administration.

Benchmark Scores – How BMCC Compares to our Peers and the Cohort

Figure 1 below shows BMCC Benchmark scores for governance as compared to the scores of other COACHE participants. BMCC is represented as the black diamond in each area, while the other COACHE participants are represented as vertical lines. The range in responses is represented across the red to blue lines. Blue lines represent the top 30% of institutions, red lines represent the bottom 30%, and gray lines represent institutions in the middle. The circles are the five CUNY Community Colleges. The back line in each category represents our prior results from 2019.

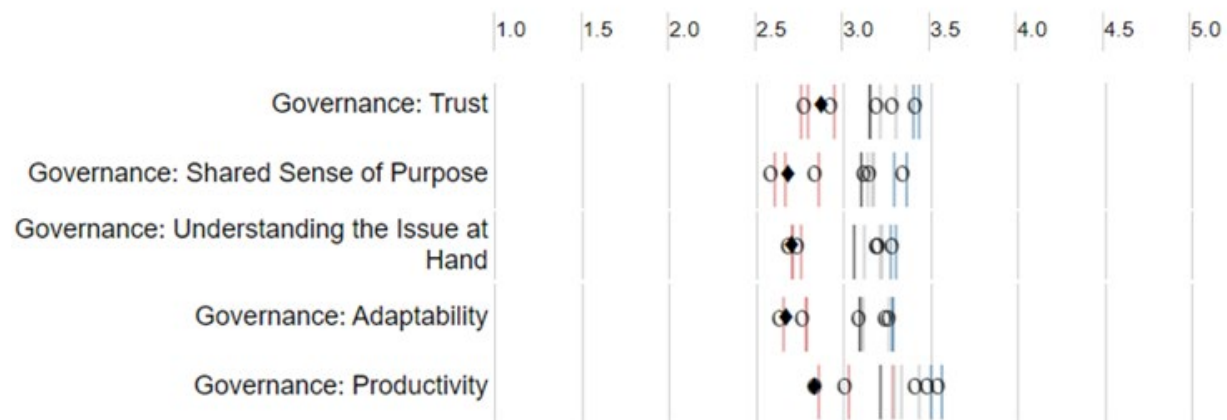


Figure 1: Benchmark scores

In figure 1, we see that BMCC (black diamond) is in the bottom 30% in every category. Two of our fellow CUNY community colleges (open circles) are in the bottom 30% for all but the last category, but the other three community colleges are higher. BMCC is also quite a bit under our 2019 results (black line) in each category.

Mean Responses

Table 1, below, shows the mean responses for each of the governance questions. A score of 1 represents strongly disagree, never, or very ineffective, depending on the five possible answer choices, while 5 represents strongly agree, frequently, or very effective. SD is the standard deviation, which is how far most faculty tend to differ from that mean. Red type indicates a mean below 2.6; shaded cells indicate a drop of more than 0.5 from 2019 to 2022.

Item	Short Name	BMCC 2023		BMCC 2019	
		mean	SD	mean	SD
	Governance: Trust	2.84	0.98	3.13	0.94
Q188B	I understand how to voice opinions about policies	3.04	1.23	3.12	1.23
Q188C	Clear rules about the roles of faculty and administration	2.85	1.24	3.21	1.18
Q189B_D	Faculty and admin follow rules of engagement	2.92	1.17	3.38	0.99
Q189B_E	Faculty and admin have an open system of communication	2.57	1.06	3.16	1.07
Q189B_G	Faculty and admin discuss difficult issues in good faith	2.86	1.1	3.2	1
	Governance: Shared Sense of Purpose	2.65	0.99	3.08	0.99
Q189A_D	Important decisions are not made until there is consensus	2.21	1.1	2.83	1.22
Q189A_E	Admin ensures sufficient time for faculty input	2.45	1.02	3	1.08
Q189B_C	Faculty and admin respectfully consider the other's view	2.7	1.07	3.13	1.05
Q189B_F	Faculty and admin have a shared sense of responsibility	3.19	1.19	3.46	0.99
	Governance: Understanding the Issue at Hand	2.67	0.98	3.04	0.95
Q188A	Faculty governance structures offer opportunities for input	2.78	1.23	3.23	1.18

Q189A_F	Admin communicate rationale for important decisions	2.58	1.05	3.03	1.08
Q189B_A	Faculty and admin have equal say in decisions	2.39	1.11	2.85	1.17
Q189B_B	Faculty and admin define decision criteria together	2.7	1.13	3.16	1.05
	Governance: Adaptability	2.64	1	3.07	0.91
Q188D	Shared governance holds up in unusual circumstances	2.69	1.18	3.07	1.08
Q188E	Institution regularly reviews effectiveness of governance	2.55	1.18	2.98	1.15
Q189A_C	Institution cultivates new faculty leaders	2.64	1	3.2	1.07
	Governance: Productivity	2.8	1.03	3.19	0.93
Q187B	Overall effectiveness of shared governance	2.69	1.3	3.24	1.16
Q189A_A	My committees make measurable progress towards goals	3.07	1.07	3.37	0.98
Q189A_B	Public recognition of progress	2.61	1.08	3.09	1.04

Table 1: Mean responses to each question

From the table, we see eight questions that raise the greatest concern.

Five questions showed means of below 2.6. The first two (D & E) also showed a drop of more than 0.5 since 2019.:

- Q189A_D: Important decisions are not made until there is consensus;
- Q189A_E: Admin ensures sufficient time for faculty input;
- Q189A_F: Admin communicate rationale for important decisions;
- Q189B_A: Faculty and admin have equal say in decisions; and
- Q188E: Institution regularly reviews effectiveness of governance.

These three questions also showed a drop of more than 0.5 since 2019:

- Q189B_E: Faculty and admin have an open system of communication;
- Q189A_C: Institution cultivates new faculty leaders; and
- Q187B: Overall effectiveness of shared governance.

Looking at these eight questions more closely in Table 2, below, we can see four questions where less than 14% of faculty answered positively. For the question, “Important decisions are not made until there is consensus,” only 2.5% of faculty said this occurred frequently, and 6.7% that it occurred regularly, for a total of 9.2%.

The question with the second lowest positive response rate was, “Admin ensures sufficient time for faculty input,” with 2.5% choosing “frequently,” and 9.2% “regularly,” for a total of 11.7%. Only 2.1% chose “frequently” in answer to, “Faculty and admin have equal say in decisions,” and 10.9% chose “regularly,” for a total of 13%.

Finally, only 13.3% answered positively to the question, “Institution cultivates new faculty leaders;” 3.3% chose “frequently” and 10% chose “regularly.”

Question	Percent responding positively	
Q189A_D: Important decisions are not made until there is consensus	Frequently	2.5%
	Regularly	6.7%
	Total	9.2%
Q189A_E: Admin ensures sufficient time for faculty input	Frequently	2.5%
	Regularly	9.2%
	Total	11.7%
Q189A_F: Admin communicate rationale for important decisions	Frequently	2.9%
	Regularly	12.9%
	Total	15.8%
Q189B_A: Faculty and admin have equal say in decisions	Frequently	2.1%
	Regularly	10.9%
	Total	13%
Q188E: Institution regularly reviews effectiveness of governance	Strongly agree	5.4%
	Agree	13.3%
	Total	18.7%
Q189B_E: Faculty and admin have an open system of communication	Frequently	2.5%
	Regularly	12.1%
	Total	14.6%
Q189A_C: Institution cultivates new faculty leaders	Frequently	3.3%
	Regularly	10%
	Total	13.3%
Q187B: Overall effectiveness of shared governance.	Very Effective	6.6%
	Somewhat Effective	24%
	Total	30.6%

Table 2: Positive response rates for the eight questions with lowest means and/or highest drops from 2019

Differences in Responses for Women and Men; for Faculty of Color and White Faculty

Table 3 shows the difference in each of the eight questions in terms of women’s and men’s responses, and faculty of color and white faculty responses. In most categories, women showed more dissatisfaction with governance than men. Differences in the level of dissatisfaction ranged from 1.3 to 9.3 percentage points. The highest differences were on the questions of ensuring time for faculty input, and whether the institution cultivates new faculty leaders. In both questions, a higher proportion of women responded negatively than men.

Faculty of color showed less dissatisfaction than white faculty. Here the differences were more marked, ranging from 4 to 19.9 percentage points. The largest differences were on ensuring time for faculty input, on the overall effectiveness of shared government, and on important decisions

not being made until there is consensus; on all three of these questions, a higher proportion of faculty of color were satisfied.

Despite the differences between groups, all groups showed far more dissatisfaction (negative responses) than satisfaction (positive responses). The only exception to this was the question on overall effectiveness of shared governance, where faculty of color were slightly more positive (37.2%) than negative (33.4%). However, this question was the only one that had five answer options, with one neutral category (neither effective nor ineffective) that was chosen by many respondents. 16.2% of faculty of color chose this option.

Q189A_D: Important decisions are not made until there is consensus				
	Women	Men	Faculty of Color	White Faculty
Positive	8.7%	10.1%	12.5%	6.2%
Negative	48.6%	42.7%	35.6%	53.9%
Q189A_E: Admin ensures sufficient time for faculty input				
	Women	Men	Faculty of Color	White Faculty
Positive	9.4%	14.6%	17.4%	7.1%
Negative	46.4%	37.1%	31.7%	51.6%
Q189A_F: Admin communicate rationale for important decisions				
	Women	Men	Faculty of Color	White Faculty
Positive	13.8%	19.1%	20.2%	12.5%
Negative	39.1%	37.1%	32.7%	43%
Q189B_A: Faculty and admin have equal say in decisions				
	Women	Men	Faculty of Color	White Faculty
Positive	13.8%	12.5%	20.3%	7.8%
Negative	40.5%	39.7%	30.1%	47.6%
Q188E: Institution regularly reviews effectiveness of governance				
	Women	Men	Faculty of Color	White Faculty
Positive	17.3%	20.2%	21.2%	17.2%
Negative	43.5%	43.8%	33.7%	50.8%
Q189B_E: Faculty and admin have an open system of communication				

	Women	Men	Faculty of Color	White Faculty
Positive	12.3%	18.2%	20.3%	11%
Negative	37.7%	34%	28.2%	42.9%
Q189A_C: Institution cultivates new faculty leaders				
	Women	Men	Faculty of Color	White Faculty
Positive	12.3%	14.6%	18.2%	9.4%
Negative	37.6%	30.3%	27.9%	40.6%
Q187B: Overall effectiveness of shared governance.				
	Women	Men	Faculty of Color	White Faculty
Positive	28.3%	35.2%	37.2%	25.6%
Neutral	9.4%	13.2%	16.2%	7.8%
Negative	47.8%	41.8%	33.4%	52.7%

Table 3: Positive and Negative Response Rates for Women and Men, Faculty of Color and White Faculty

Responses from the Qualitative Questions that Address Governance

Even though there are no explicit qualitative questions on college governance, it was mentioned in response to a number of questions. For example, in response to the question of what we should do to improve BMCC, 10% mentioned shared governance.

The following summarizes the reactions across the open-ended questions that included governance. If a question is not included, there were no answers/responses under that question that addressed governance.

The way that the college reacted to the pandemic shifted our teaching, scholarship, and service work. Some aspects of this shift were seen to have negative consequences for governance. Some respondents felt that the governance process was disregarded at the departmental level during the pandemic and faculty were treated as instructional staff without regard for service, scholarship, or innovation. People noted that the pandemic increased the extent to which administration dictated decisions to faculty rather than working collaboratively towards shared goals. The rift between administration and faculty grew immensely to the extent that some felt there was no support from the administration at all for anything.

“The pandemic has increased the extent to which the administration dictates decisions to faculty rather than working collaboratively towards shared goals.”

“I feel the rift between administration and faculty has grown immensely - it feels like everyone hides in their offices and there is little communication. Generally there is no support from the administration at all, for anything.”

“We care for our students but there’s no compassion or care for faculty, especially in the past few years of our doomsday predicament. The institution and administration could extend some kindness to faculty, we’re not an afterthought; we spend more time with the students than anyone and almost everyone I speak to is overworked and feels unappreciated.”

“An increase in top-down decision making, lack of communication and consultation, and imposing policies and procedures that faculty have no meaningful input into.”

“At this moment, the pressure on faculty to help figure out the low enrollment is detracting from the quality of working at BMCC. Items such as FDIC lists and narratives about faculty responsibility for low enrollment, or students dropping, not re-enrolling, shows that the administration views faculty as problems and puts faith in numbers rather than conducting vital qualitative research that would better explain the structural issues that impact our students.”

Faculty saw the administration become most concerned about retention but felt they did not solicit input from faculty members who have knowledge in this area. There was the sentiment that BMCC shifted its priority of being the best community college in the city, attractive for the high quality of its faculty, to a career placement and job training place. But faculty were hired for research capabilities and are now being disregarded. This sends a negative message that the administration doesn't care about the faculty.

“BMCC has shifted its priority from being the best CC in the city, the most attractive for the high quality of its faculty, to a career placement and job training place. They plan to do this with the same faculty they hired years ago, encouraging us to do research. Our promotion and tenure criteria are set on the basis of PUBLICATIONS, but the everyday emphasis is on teaching and retention of students through SERVICE. Yet, there is no recognition of teaching excellence AT ALL, and there is no RT for those who engage in service. This in my view is a totally incoherent approach to treating faculty that sends a very negative message that the administration just doesn't care about the faculty.”

To make the workload more manageable, faculty suggested that there be more dialogue with faculty and stronger shared governance practices. To reduce the amount of time spent on unnecessary administrative work that doesn't require the expertise of teachers and scholars, it was suggested that the administration be more practical and clearer in their requests for faculty administrative work, factoring in time management. The college needs to be more transparent about its decisions. It can involve faculty more closely in governance, instead of passing down commands that require a great deal of committee work to implement.

“Our leadership needs to respect and listen to the faculty's expressed needs. We were supposedly hired because we are experts in our field, then we are treated like children by the administration when we make requests. The extreme adherence to hierarchy makes communication impossible - we do not "work with" we are "dictated to." There is no sense of shared goals or a shared mission. The relationship between faculty and the administration is deeply dysfunctional and the students suffer for it.”

“Get rid of arbitrary policies (e.g., fixed number of days required to teach in person or show up on campus, office hours must be held in your office rather than online or elsewhere on campus, etc.), and instead replace them with policies that center student needs instead (e.g., have rigorous training and supports to generate high-quality online courses, let faculty hold office hours wherever their students find it most convenient to attend, etc.). Treat us like professionals who care about our students and the quality of our research, and let us do that work in the ways that we work best.”

Considering the varieties of identities that influence how people are treated, and whether faculty have experience or observed instances of marginalization or exclusion, microaggressions, blatant hostility or other inequitable treatment at BMCC, one theme was that if the administration does not treat faculty with respect, chairs and other managerial faculty follow that example. This reinforces the idea that there are insiders and outsiders and that it is okay for the insiders to be disrespectful. Some respondents described a culture of bullying, and that the union has been mistreated.

In discussing individual, cultural or structural factors at the college that have contributed to marginalization or oppression and describing actions that the college could take to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all BMCC community members, the issue of respecting and trusting faculty was again mentioned. There was felt to be a selectivity of leadership and marginalizing of employees by administration. It was felt that the college could support mental and emotional health by addressing things that contribute to a toxic climate at BMCC, such as the deficit view and treatment of faculty, staff, and students.

“The number one problem is one of toxic institutional culture—fundamentally BMCC does not value or listen to anyone except administrators, and they have a deficit orientation of faculty and staff. There is lots of talk of a “culture of care” and about listening to students and having an asset rather than deficit view of students, but the administration still has a severe deficit view of faculty and staff. Rules are arbitrary and often to the detriment of institutional priorities, but the administration never actually acts on faculty feedback about this. There are many policies that are instituted for no good reason other than to control faculty—policies are always “one size fits all”, which is presented under a guise of fairness, but in reality poorly serve the values of an institution that cares about equity and diversity.”

Faculty also felt that the administration acts independently of faculty and said that governance should include less administration and more actual faculty decision making. Some felt that the senate “just seems like an advisory board.” One example mentioned was that when faculty make thoughtful recommendations in reports they are asked to write by the administration, the recommendations are then ignored.

“I have served on dozens of committees where we were tasked with writing reports and recommendations, many of which included carefully reasoned arguments and substantial analysis of evidence, and these have all been mostly systematically ignored, with leadership never providing any response to the reports indicating their reasons for ignoring faculty and staff recommendations.”

“Several years ago, BMCC conducted another COACHE survey where we already explained the two things we were mostly dissatisfied with: lack of support for research/teaching/service and lack of RT for people conducting research or special service projects. The administration already knows what we are dissatisfied with but does nothing about it. To the contrary, they reduced or eliminated the few research grants they used to offer. What's the point of doing these COACHE surveys (and spend the money on it) when the results are ignored and nothing substantial is done about how unhappy, unrecognized and unsupported faculty feel?”

Faculty and staff time is treated as free labor, with no compensation in terms of reassigned time or pay, and faculty and staff are treated as endless sources of this labor. It was also noted that when things go wrong, faculty and staff are expected to pick up the pieces, even when the “emergencies” are just the result of poor planning.

“Workloads of faculty and staff are often arbitrarily raised as though there is no cost whatsoever to increasing the workload (staff are often expected to do the job of 2-3 people, which negatively impacts faculty and students who can't get services; faculty are often expected to take on time-consuming roles in addition to their teaching/research/advising, with no RT or compensation; the institution says that they care about teaching, but they never acknowledge the heavy workload needed to actually teach students well).”

Some respondents felt that with major changes in senior administration, it can be difficult to know who has the knowledge for certain issues, and it has felt disorganized. In addition, faculty noted that it has been difficult to communicate with rotating HR staff, and that it is difficult to get help from administrative offices.

“A lot of general policy and logistical mechanisms for important processes are made almost opaque by lack of communication and attention to detail on the part of the administration. Students go through extremely challenging bureaucratic/technological processes... As a faculty member, finding the right administrator to do basic necessary things like submit funding receipts, get network access to a computer, get a student signed up for a class, requires asking various people, most of whom will not respond, until you get lucky enough to find someone who can actually get something done, to the point that faculty often give up. There is no clarity about who has responsibility for what and there is no accountability when the basic functions of the institution don't work.”

Improvements Needed at BMCC

Based on the responses to the COACHE survey questions, the following areas must be improved at BMCC: communication, effectiveness of governance, faculty input into decision making, and cultivation of faculty leaders.

As it stands currently at BMCC, important decisions are not made with sufficient time nor real effort to encourage faculty input and consensus building. The rationale for important decisions is often not communicated, and, in general, BMCC lacks an open system of communication between the administration and all faculty. Administrative roles are often unclear, and faculty

input is routinely ignored. BMCC must work harder to communicate openly with all faculty and involve faculty in decision making. BMCC should regularly review the effectiveness of governance and should cultivate new faculty leaders.

A. Communication

Current Practice

Currently, policies, procedures, deadlines and announcements are done in the following ways:

- Presentations at College Council;
- Emails to Academic Department Chairs who are then responsible for disseminating to the faculty in their departments;
- Verbal communications to Academic Department Chairs who are then responsible for disseminating to the faculty in their departments;
- Emails to all faculty. These emails come from the Office of the President, Academic Affairs or other areas. For example, the Registrar may communicate a grade related policy through email;
- Posts on the BMCC Website, with the areas most pertinent to faculty being:
Office of Academic Affairs Policies: <https://www.bmcc.cuny.edu/academics/policies/>
Office of the Registrar (under Policies and General Information at the bottom of the page) <https://www.bmcc.cuny.edu/registrar/>;
Human Resources: <https://www.bmcc.cuny.edu/hr/employees/policies/>;
Faculty Handbook: <https://www.bmcc.cuny.edu/academics/faculty-affairs/faculty-handbook/policies/>; and
- Alerts from the CUNY Alert system, used also for time sensitive information like school closure, safety concerns et.

News, deadlines and updates are currently available on the BMCC website in the [News](#) and [Calendar](#) sections.

Communication Issues

The first three communication methods, presenting at College Council and disseminating through chairs via email or verbally, are limited in their ability to reach all faculty, and additionally, may run the risk of being misinterpreted if they are communicated through intermediaries. In addition, while email remains an essential part of communication, faculty can be overwhelmed by or miss emails, thus, anything communicated solely through a single email is also likely to be limited in its reach.

The news and calendar sections are both overwhelming and incomplete. They are overwhelming because BMCC is such a large and active campus that there are numerous news and calendar events entered daily. It can be hard for anyone to sift through these for those items that are relevant to them. They are incomplete because they often do not include faculty specific information like reappointment, promotion and tenure deadlines; new academic policies, research and funding deadlines; and information on trainings. The Center for Excellence in Teaching, Learning and Scholarship does keep a web site with blog posts, events and announcements: <https://cetls.bmcc.cuny.edu/>. This is not common in other offices, where the standard communication is through email.

There is no central, easily accessible location that describes each administrator and their job function, so it is difficult for faculty to figure out who to talk to about issues as they arise. With a large amount of turnover and recent new administrative hires, this issue is more crucial than ever.

Suggested Improvements in Communication

1. News for faculty.

On the BMCC website (perhaps under the faculty/staff tab), create a tab with news for faculty, updated regularly, where faculty information is collected. Inside this tab can be links to other parts of the BMCC website with the news tab as a central gathering place.

The tab should include:

- Meeting announcements;
 - Policy updates;
 - New procedures;
 - Links and info about mandatory trainings (such as the ethics training); and
 - Copies of any BMCC-wide emails sent out.
2. Administration should communicate information and policy decisions directly and regularly with *all* faculty, so that information is widely known. These communications can be via email, but should also be linked in the news for faculty tab.
3. Senators should be encouraged by their department chairs to give report backs on senate meetings at their department meetings; this should include sharing information and soliciting questions.
4. An organizational chart that includes administrative job titles and functions should be placed in a prominent place on the BMCC website. Such a chart does currently exist for BMCC, at <https://bmccprodstroac.blob.core.windows.net/uploads/2024/01/BMCC-Federal-AAP-2023-2024-Final.pdf>, but needs to be posted more prominently. An example of such a chart can be found on the Hostos Community College website, <https://www.hostos.cuny.edu/Administrative-Offices/Office-of-the-President/Organizational-Charts>.

B. Effectiveness of Governance

Issues

Currently, there are three major issues impeding the effectiveness of the Academic Senate in governance: time, attendance, and a lack of responsiveness from administration to concerns raised in the senate.

1. The College Council meeting runs right before the Academic Senate meeting and consistently goes over time, reducing the 60-minute Senate meeting to 40-50 minutes.
2. Attendance by Senators has been a problem. The majority of eligible members (not members present) must vote in favor of a motion, which means any vote needs 49 affirmative votes to pass. Meeting attendance has typically been in the low 50's so that if only a handful of members present vote no or abstain a motion will not pass.

3. Senate resolutions are routinely ignored by the administration; so much so, that a resolution was passed in the senate on January 25th, 2023, resolving “that the administration respond explicitly and in a timely manner to resolutions passed by the Academic Senate.”

Suggested Improvements in Governance

1. The order of the senate and college council meetings should be reversed, so that the senate meeting is first.
2. Administrators should stay for full length of both college council and senate meetings, to demonstrate that they value the concerns raised.
3. The president’s report should be shorter. As mentioned in the communication section, it should also subsequently be publicized to the whole college (it is currently placed on the senate part of the BMCC webpage; all faculty can see it, but many do not know it is there).
4. Administration should respond to senate resolutions within a certain time frame, both at the senate meetings and college wide, with the means of communication defined.
5. The Senate should send faculty attendance to department chairs.

C. Faculty Input into Decision Making and Cultivating New Leadership

Issues

1. Faculty are dissatisfied with the amount of input they have in important college decisions.
2. Engagement of Faculty in governance and in the functioning of the college is down; understandably so, if faculty do not feel that their input matters.
3. College Council should be about dialogue between administration and Faculty. There is currently little time for meaningful discussion.
4. Faculty expertise is underutilized.

Suggested Improvements in Faculty Input

1. There should be a faculty representative on the college cabinet.
2. Administration must create more ways for faculty to contribute to decision making, both inside and outside of the faculty senate. For example, the Brightspace meeting which solicited feedback and concerns from faculty was a good start and can be used as a model for how to bring stakeholders together on important issues.
3. We need policies to protect timelines for decision making, so that faculty are not faced with sudden emergency requests.

4. The College Council should involve more time for questions and feedback. There should be more dialog and exchanges, not just being talked at with reports of the administration's activities. One way to do this could be to eliminate the President's Report in College Council, post it ahead and/or do a 5-minute highlight.
5. Additionally, since council meetings are limited to an hour, other avenues for discussion on key topics should be created (see #2).
6. The administration should be open about hiring and involve department chairs in the process.
7. There should be more transparency regarding administrative decisions in general.
8. A committee on student retention should be established that includes both faculty and staff. For other pressing college issues, faculty should be contacted to see if there is interest and expertise.
9. Placing more value in faculty input and concerns can allow for new faculty leaders to emerge.